

Washington, DC – On Monday, Harry Teague hosted a Katie's Law Summit in Albuquerque to discuss the impact of DNA fingerprinting on solving and preventing violent crimes. The Katie Sepich Enhanced DNA Collection Act, passed by the House of Representatives in May, is a bipartisan bill that encourages states to maximize the potential of forensic DNA to solve and prevent violent crimes by collecting a DNA sample upon arrest at the same time as fingerprints for certain felony crimes. Harry Teague discussed his progress in making Katie's Law, already adopted by 24 states individually, into a national law, and announced that New Mexico Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall are planning to formally introduce the legislation in the Senate.

"I am pleased to announce that Senator Bingaman and Udall are fully committed to working with senators from both sides of the aisle to make sure that this bill passes the Senate," Harry Teague said. "Katie's Law allows law enforcement to treat DNA evidence left at the scene of a crime as they do fingerprints. The fact is that the science has advanced and we should allow law enforcement to use all the technology available to them to better identify criminals and keep them from walking the streets."

The event featured panel discussions on addressing post-arrestee DNA collection from the perspectives of law enforcement, legal persons, and victims and survivors. Speakers at the event included Jayann Sepich, mother of Katie Sepich and champion of DNA fingerprinting, Former Assistant Attorney General Steven Suttle, Las Cruces Deputy Chief of Police Chris Miller, Valencia County Sheriff Rene Rivera, and Amanda Foor, rape survivor and an affiliate of the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN). A video message from John Walsh, host of America's Most Wanted and advocate for DNA fingerprinting, kicked off the event.

Harry Teague, a strong supporter of the use of forensic DNA in violent crime cases, introduced the Katie Sepich Enhanced DNA Collection Act (H.R. 4614), is named after Katie Sepich, from

Carlsbad, New Mexico, who was 22 years old when she was brutally raped and murdered. DNA under Katie's fingernails helped the police develop a DNA profile for her killer and this profile was included in the national database where all DNA samples are kept. Three years later in 2006, the New Mexico DNA database finally matched the unknown profile to Gabriel Avilla who had been arrested for several other crimes, including a felony burglary in November 2003. Katie's Law was not enacted in New Mexico until January of 2007. If New Mexico had required a DNA sample for Avilla's felony arrest in November 2003, investigators might have solved Katie's murder sooner and caught Avilla before he was left free to roam the streets for three years. Harry Teague worked with Katie's parents, Jayann and David Sepich of Carlsbad to take this New Mexico law to the federal level, where it passed the US House of Representatives and awaits consideration in the Senate.

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